

National Catholic Theater Conference

PRODUCTION CALENDAR

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THE CUE SHEET

Mercian Players of Mercy College, Detroit, introduces a new note to the symphony of National Federation of Catholic College Students activity. On February 19, Volume 1, Number 1 of The Cue Sheet was mailed to colleges in the Detroit area.

The Cue Sheet provides summary reviews of Broadway shows and Hollywood films, giving special emphasis to current attractions in Detroit. Its destination is the bulletin board at University of Detroit, Mary Manse, Siena Heights and Marygrove, and of course Mercy College's own notice board.

Congratulations to Mercian Players on their initiative! The Conference is happy to contribute its "Broadway Arrivals" to The Cue Sheet.

THE VOLUNTEER IN DRAMA

By Bert Jahr, USO Drama Specialist

In its four years' existence the USO has become an integral and vital part of the American Community. Our directors have learned that people - the members of the armed forces, war production workers, and the community are helped in making adjustments not only through people but through things - activities - as well! One of the key program activities is Drama. This program serves to bring persons into closer fellowship; even more important, it is a means of projecting the best values inherent in American living and fellowship not only for those who do but also for those who watch.

Our directors seek the assistance of professional, university and little theater people who wish to contribute very positively to the well being of newcomers to their villages, towns and cities. The volunteer is the key to the USO program, for through the volunteer we tie the stranger in our midst into our communal hearts.

The Drama Volunteer may not be all things to all men, but he can mean so much to many - to the men coming into the clubs from hospitals, "those on the mend," to those who are whole in body and seeking for the warmth and security they fear is lost. An activities program, dramatics in particular, well organized, becomes one of the tools in our hands.

The two phases that can be stressed for our needs are: 1) The completed productions brought into club or camp through USO and the community; 2) perhaps more important, those volunteers who can get the men themselves to participate in a program of informal dramatics. A program that will become a regular and normal part of USO Club Life, just as dancing is; a program in which we think in terms of recreation before art, in this way jumping the first hurdle toward a real appreciation of the fun in "doing." Such a program needs no stage or curtain. All it needs is a willing volunteer who will relegate to the background his or her artistic standards and work according to the needs of the USO constituency.

The sources are many. Your local USO Director will help through his contact with the National USO. Let us have volunteers who are willing to take down the curtain for Informal Drama Recreation.

STAGING "BABY CYCLONE"

By Rev. Karl G. Schroeder

Production of Cohan's "The Baby Cyclone" presented three problems, as I recall.

First: the script. The lines as they stood needed no alteration, but there was a profusion of "damns" and "hells". After careful deliberation, and because both words are really slang and occurred in heated situation, were not only in character but were also funny, I decided to leave them.

Second: the script called for 3 completely different interiors. After careful planning it was decided to use gray velours, hanging in this case approximately 7 to 8 ft. off the floor. Small flats were built, 5 ft. wide and 8 ft. high, with plugs for doors and windows. Three arches with plugs were constructed - two with doors, one with a wall; then a second set of plugs with three floor length windows. These for the rear wall. Then for the side walls 2 flats of the same dimensions were built, with door plugs to be used for either side. Four other flats, 2½ ft. wide, were also built to be used in corners where side wall met rear wall. So, as a matter of fact, the building involved little trouble. The arrangement of the flats was in this order: Act I - 3 arches, flanked on each side with small 2½ ft. flat, for rear wall; arches were open; side walls were "solid" - comprising a wide flat and a narrow one; behind arches the backing was set - solid wall 7 ft. behind arches; stairway Stage R. This gave exit Stage R to kitchen, front door Stage L beyond the arches. For Act II, the apartment, middle arch was plugged "solid", doors were fitted in and arches. Door was used in plug wall Stage R. For Act III, window plugs were used in rear arches, door in right wall kept and another placed in L wall. Further changes can be wrought with pictures, drapes, etc. Different set of furniture is needed for each act.

Third: Slamming doors. Doors were light wooden frames, paneled and inset with wall board. Had their own frames and were set back of scenery. Every time doors slammed scenery did not shake.

"The Baby Cyclone" is a farce; keep it moving in double quick time. Watch enunciation of actors in those portions of play which demand rapidity.

CROSS COUNTRY CIRCUIT

Conference members productions this month deserve bold type. We're proud of them, and we suggest you file this column for ready reference when your spirit is low and you're inclined to think that Catholic Theater is no more than the harmless from Broadway and the catalogs.

Detroit - March 15 through 28th Catholic Theater of Detroit presents its Lenten play.

Dubuque - Loras College Players introduce "Trail Gate" by Morna Stuart. The drama stresses the struggle of St. Thomas More within himself rather than the conflict with Henry VIII and his councillors. The last of Loras Players drama series this season scheduled for March 18.

Louisville - Catholic Theater Guild offers "The Song of Bernadette" March 11-12th.

New York - March 14--16, Xavier Dramatic Guild presents "Whom the Lord Loveth," a 3-act play adapted from Michael Kent's "The Mass of Brother Michel" by Rev. H. A. Pfeifer, S.J. Stage settings designed by Father Pfeifer, have been student-made under the supervision of Rev. F. R. Frohenhoefer, S.J. At Xavier High School Theater.

New York - Blackfriars' Guild for its Lenten play offers "Simon's Wife." Rev. Francis D. Alwaise's novel script introduces the characters of the Chief Apostle's family circle and shows the influence of Christ's message on the small people of Israel. At Blackfriars's Theater March 8 through 27.

Richmond - Catholic Theater Guild in a pageant of the events following the Crucifixion, "Return from Calvary," written by Father O'Kane. Performances March 18 and 25. The Guild is also sponsoring a series of Lenten broadcasts over WRVA at 12:15 each Sunday.

West Hartford - On March 6, the eve of the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, Queens's Company presents "Chiara" for the Saint Thomas Junior League Program. This is the one-act play on St. Thomas published in the Conference's quarterly "Catholic Theater" in 1939.

Whiting, Ind. - St. John's CYO Drama Club in "Career Angel" on March 18.

Have all the members of your group seen this month's issue of the Calendar?

POSTSCRIPTS

Two productions of the all-girl Career Angel have already been arranged. and wish all Dramatists typed scripts in service the play is "moving", publishers understatement for the open-arm welcome given the new script. At Calendar deadline Dramatists Play Service announces printed play copies ready about March 20. While there is no guaranty on this publication date, Dramatists is doing its best to hurry the printer, and if your production is not due until mid-May the printed books will save you much typing time.

One of many favorable responses to our Gheon issue is Genevieve Sullivan Garzero's donation to our library of a translation of "La Farce du Pendu Dependu". Mrs. Garzero writes: "You may remember Catherine Musante who did the translation. She was one of the founders of the San Francisco Catholic Theater Guild and attended two of the national conventions, Washington and New York. She is now a nun in the Carmelite Monastery at Menlo Park, California, but at the time of the translation ('40-41) she was head of the French Department at San Francisco Junior College. She had been in correspondence with Gheon whom she had met in Europe, had been the means of having his "Marriage of Saint Francis" performed at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1939, and so had permission to work with whatever plays of his she wanted to try her hand at. By the time she had finished Le Hanged Man, Gheon's correspondence was cut off by war. The play was to have been our next Guild production at San Francisco - an ad in our "Pie in the Sky" program announced it for Feb. 1942 ...the fortunes of war! The script is for the library. It stands as it came from our translator's desk, so much remains to be cut, combined - but at least it's a workable script.

From Sister Felice of Atlanta comes a thrilling thank-you for Conference Service. She talks about personal service for personal problems - that's the aim of the Service Bureau. Its capacity to do the job depends on the number of groups and individuals who will share the expense of the organization. You can help to make the Conference self-supporting by enlisting new members

BROADWAY ARRIVALS

By Mrs. Christopher Wyatt

And Be My Love - Walter Hampden does his best to redeem an incredibly badly written comedy.

Hope for the Best - If there is too much dialogue it is written with wit and with charm on a sound political theme and played by Franchot Tone and Jane Wyatt.

One Man Show - Drama with some brilliant writing and disagreeably abnormal undercurrent, acted by Constance Cummings.

The Overtons - Impossible in every way, including vulgarity.

The Stranger - Drama of racism unfortunately yoked to a Jack-the-Ripper melodramatic theme.

FOR THE MEN

To our library is added "Through the Eye of a Needle," the original comedy produced at Cathedral College, Brooklyn, last spring. To a community of Brothers comes a banker who is seizing the opportunity of being thought dead to exchange the rigors of his previous life for some peace and quiet. But some of his habits - reading the financial page, for example - are frowned on in the household, and life with the community is not without stress. If you are looking for a play with an all-male cast here is another "Career Angel."

Pfc. Raymond F. Lee, formerly a member of Catholic Theater Guild of Los Angeles has sent us a one-act war play, "Cross in the Jungle." Strictly men's work, needing plenty of gunfire and some sawdust bodies, it is a dramatic statement of faith on the South Pacific front,

BONUS FOR MEMBERS

In its quarterly in 1938 and 1939 the Conference published three 1-act plays: "Chiara", mentioned in our Circuit this month; "Of Equal Dust", drama for three men on the race problem; and "The Infinite Bridge", an after-death fantasy calling for one girl and two men. Copies of the issues in which the plays appeared are available and will be sent to group members on request.

WITH CONFERENCE MEMBERS

Snow and ice plus rain couldn't stay Props and Paint's enthusiastic supporters from the February 22 performance of The Song of Bernadette. And they were rewarded for the large cast of Sophomore members of New Rochelle's dramatic group brought Bernadette's humble but marvelous story to life with keen characterizations. Students of the School of the Holy Child at Sharon were interested auditors -- their production is already underway.

And a proper blizzard supplied mood for "The Winter's Tale" at Saint Joseph College. Hartford's leading drama critic lauded the "estimable Queens's Companye and the over-all intelligence and directness of Sister Maria Andilla's direction. His "The Queens's Companye aims at no theater frills or furbelows....its love of Shakespeare is delivered like Othello for Desdemona as a 'round unvarnished tale', sensible and sound...." is a worthy goal rarely achieved. The Companye goes on to "Everyman" rehearsals, with a performance of Chiara on Mar. 6 as interlude.

Sister Felician of Loretto Academy, El Paso, adds to her glowing report of the Loretto Players' happy production of "Murder in a Nunnery" a gracious offer of her experienced help to any group undertaking production. These post-performance letters to headquarters are valuable to us and to member directors. Just recently Sister Mary Donatus' summary of the first production of the all-girl "Career Angel" and Sister Miriam's (School of Brown County Ursulines) full report of her outdoor production of "Princess of the Mohawks" have proved it. Here is the basis for the "exchange of information" the Conference boasts. Will you augment the service with your post-performance notes?

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A galley-proof copy of Sister M. Constantia's "The Sultan's Daughter", translated from Gheon, is now in our library. Sister has given the Conference her translation and - as in the case of "Old Wang" the production rights in this country are controlled by NCTC.

